

Stony Creek Valley Dam Opposed

Fight for 'Wilderness' Pledged

By RICHARD SARGE
Staff Writer

The Stony Creek Valley Coalition of 16 conservation-minded groups vowed last night to "fight every inch of the way" to preserve the "closest thing we have to a wilderness" in southcentral Pennsylvania.

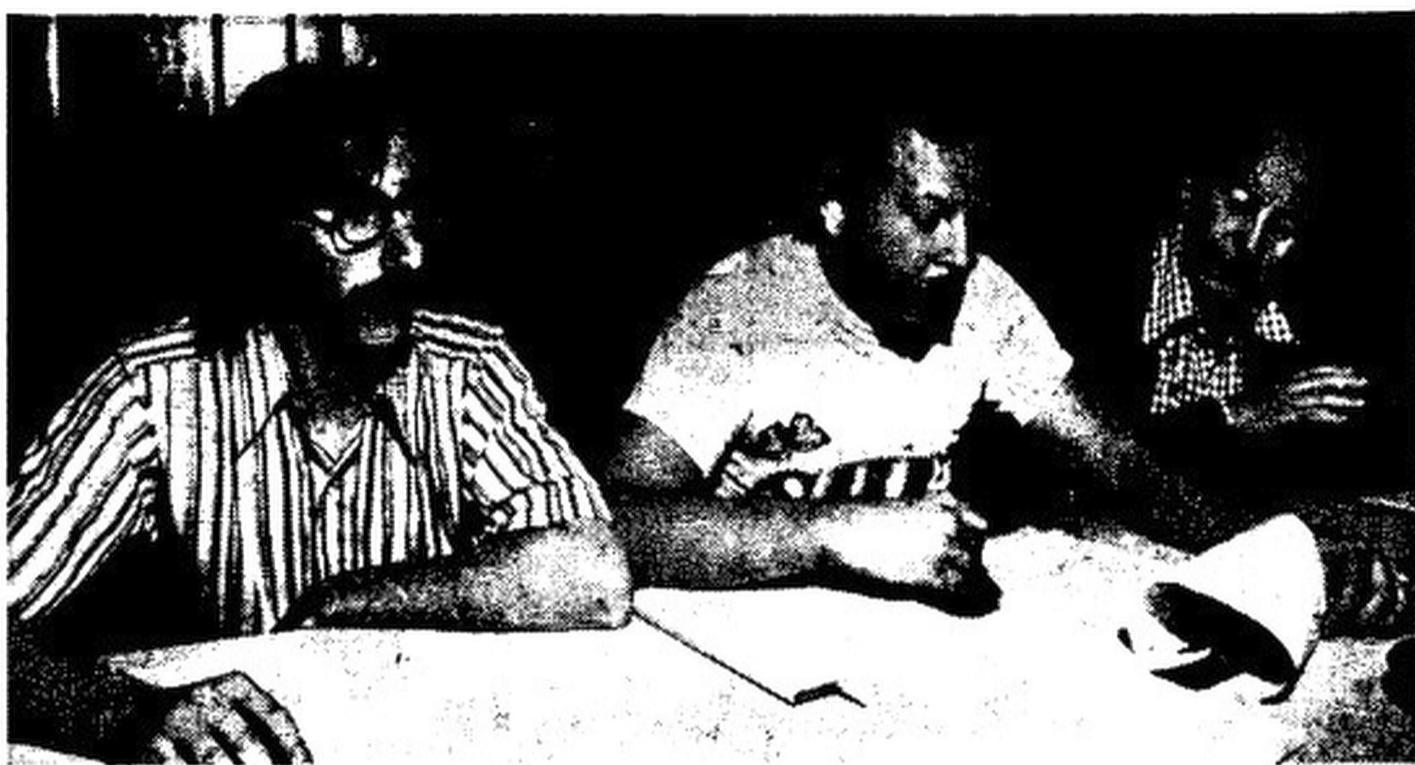
The group, which includes the battle-tested Citizens for a Safe Environment and Pennsylvania Sierra Club, is vigorously opposing the plan of the Pennsylvania Power and Light Co. (PP&L) and Metropolitan Edison to construct a 1.7 million kilowatt pumped storage electric generating facility on 1,200 acres in Stony Creek Valley.

The hydroelectric plant would include a lower reservoir of 600 acres (about 4½ miles long) located in the valley some 10 miles east of Dauphin and an upper reservoir of 265 acres located a mile north in a depression of the Stony and Sharp mountains.

Electricity would be created by funneling water down through a pipe into a motor-generator. At times of low demand, water from the lower pond would be pumped back up for another production cycle.

Reports made at last night's Stony Valley Coalition meeting indicate the organization's strength is mounting, its war chest is growing and its resolve is stiffening.

The Ridgeview Garden



-Patriot Photo

Conservation Coalition Mounts Opposition to Stony Creek Power Project

Secretary Gerald Mascavage, center, reports to attendees of last night's meeting of the Stony Creek Valley Coalition, Inc., at the Linglestown American Legion post home about actions to further the group's campaign to preserve a "wilderness" area. Co-chairman Bill Beck, left, and Treasurer Charles Twichell also made presentations.

Club and the West Shore Sportsmen's Association — 250 members strong — were admitted to membership.

Starting with \$50 from the Pennsylvania Sierra Club, the coalition has also received \$20 from the York Grotto of the National Speleological Society and \$200 of \$1,000 pledged jointly by the Pennsylvania Council and the Dauphin County chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Six thousand bumper stickers have been ordered, a mass meeting of the 300 families reported living in Stony Creek Valley has been planned and a litigation committee has been formed to study the possibility of legal action against the utilities.

Stony Creek long has been a mecca for trout fisherman and the valley is a favorite with hikers, bikers and nature lovers. John Wilk, the Coalition's public information man, said Dauphin County has only three good trout streams — Manada, Clark's and Stony Creeks, and that Stoney is the best.

PP&L reported the utilities "canvassed thousands of (square) miles looking for the best site and . . . was led to Stony Creek Valley, where geological conditions are right for pumped storage."

In addition, PP&L quotes Executive Director Glenn L. Bowers of the Pennsylvania Game Commission as saying, "This proposal appears to be an excellent proposition for the people of Pennsylvania, whatever their role — electric customer, hunter, fisherman or conservationist . . . the project represents sound use, in every respect, of natural resources."

But, in the words of coalition cochairman Bill Beck, "Stony Creek Valley is too valuable a natural resource to sacrifice." He called it "the closest thing to have to a wilderness — the only one left" in southcentral Pennsylvania.

Beck described a meeting Monday night between coalition officers and "three vice presidents and a real estate manager" of PP&L at Nationwide Inn. The utility representatives, he said, "began

by sweet-talking us."

However, Beck said, the conservation group made it plain they "would not compromise on Stony Creek Valley." Through the years, he said, Pennsylvania has been "one big compromise — and miles and miles of land have been scarred."

Beck said the PP&L men were told the utility "has a fairly good name in conservation in relation to some other utilities — except for stopping the shad on the Susquehanna River (when Holtwood Dam was built), but you're really going to blow it now . . ." and, he told last night's audience, "We'll fight them every inch of the way."

Wilk also disputed a PP&L

statement that Stony Creek is a "put and take" stream that is not self-supporting but must be stocked constantly by the Fish Commission.

He said Stony Creek is "not a marginal" as PP&L claims, adding that a forthcoming report from the State Department of Environmental Resources will bear this out.

Beck said the coalition is pressing for an alternate site (they suggest an area near Locust Gap) or alternate techniques (possibly storage batteries) or more stringent conservation of energy (eliminating the need for new plants).

While 16 organizations have banded together to fight the power project, only eight of them were represented among 22 people attending last night's meeting.

In addition to those mentioned, the Coalition includes Keystone Trails Association, Friends of Stony Creek, Capital Area Recycling Commission, Potomac-Appalachian Trail Club, Stony Creek Residents, Dauphin Anglers and Conservationists, Cumberland Valley Trout Unlimited, Dauphin County Federation of Sportsmen, Indiantown Gap Fish and Game Conservation and Appalachian Audubon Society.